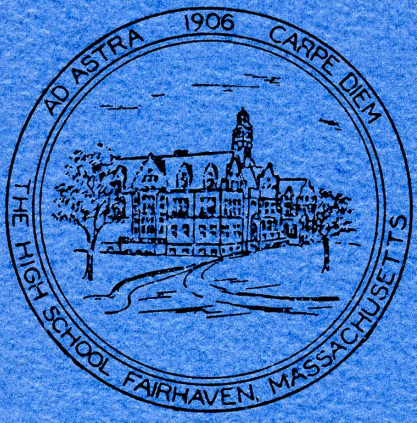
FAIRHAVEN HIGH SCHOOL

100 Years of Service

1852—1952



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PREFACE

This is the story of a school — a school that is one hundred years old. It is really more than a story, for in it are reflected the hopes, aspirations, customs, and way of life of an entire community.

You may well ask: what is a school? Or, more particularly, what is Fairhaven High School? Fairhaven High School is a place where, for a century, young people have been growing — together; it is a place where lifelong friendships have been formed. It is a place where impressionable adolescents have developed those wholesome attitudes toward life and toward each other that form the foundation of a successful community.

It is a place, too, where devoted teachers have done their best to impart knowledge and to teach an ethical way of life — to make clear to each student the difference between right and wrong. It is a place that has known many days of athletic glory, an institution that always has followed the ancient Greek precept of a sound mind in a sound body. It is a place that has grown in educational concepts, from the rather stiff classroom formality and limited curriculum of 1852 to the modern idea that the school must educate the whole child — that mere factual knowledge is not enough, but that it must be supplemented with an appreciative acquaintance with the duties and responsibilities of good citizenship and with the tenets that make for what may best be called "the good life."

Like all good schools, it is a place where cheerfulness and good humor have often prevailed. It is a place, above all, that has reflected the sound thinking and generosity of public-minded citizens who have supported it for a century.

Yes, Fairhaven High School is all this — but it is more. It is that intangible feeling of pride and affection that glows in those who call the school their alma mater. It is, in short, a place that we love and that we salute proudly on its centennial anniversary.

HISTORY OF FAIRHAVEN HIGH SCHOOL

"From good beginnings come good ends," says the adage, and with these words in mind, it is well to look back to the origin of an institution that has come to mean so much to the development of the community.

Fairhaven High School really had its inception at a meeting of the Fairhaven School Committee, called together, on November 1, 1851, by Samuel L. Ward, chairman of the group. At that meeting, the committee voted to begin the first academic term of the school on January 26, 1852. The school itself, which stood on the present site of the Huttleston Apartments (the northwest corner of Main Street at Huttleston Avenue) was once a Mehodist church, remodelled and adapted to school purposes at a cost of $4,500.

What type of community was Fairhaven in 1852? To begin with, the town numbered between 4,000 and 5,000 inhabitants. It was, to quote an early historian, "a picturesque and healthful village," which stretched leisurely along the Acushnet River "for a mile or more." The same historian assures us that the little community was "substantially homogeneous in nature, with few exceptions of either wealth or poverty."

In 1852, Fairhaven was a seafaring town. The whaling industry, which reached its zenith in neighboring New Bedford, still played a vital part in the community's economic life; in fact, in the 1850's, an average of fifteen whaling vessels a year sailed from Fairhaven. A high school boy of 1852, for example, (and Fairhaven's great benefactor, Henry Huttleston Rogers, was a member of the high school's first class) played among the wharves and dockyards, watched the coopers at work on their kegs and barrels, and visited the ropewalks and the salt works.

Fairhaven was a kindly, quiet community where skating and Lyceum Lectures were the winter's diversions, codfish dinners were the customary Saturday night bill of fare, and Quaker housewives, in particular, took delight in cooking in their great brick ovens mouth-watering delicacies, the recipes for which were inherited treasures, as precious as the family silver or portraits of ancestors.

Although the town was a serene one, it was not unaware of

the many new ideas that were shaping America. Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose Phi Beta Kappa Address at Harvard, in 1837, has been called "America's intellectual Declaration of Independence," was well-known in the community. His emphasis on "self-reliance" and his belief that Americans must cease to imitate other nations and must develop a culture of their own were applauded and understood by Fairhavenites, some of whom heard Mr. Emerson lecture many times in nearby New Bedford.

That far-seeing and epigrammatic Yankee, Henry David Thoreau, who, like Emerson, insisted on original thinking and lauded ideas and beliefs native to his country, also was well-known in Fairhaven; he was for example, a frequent visitor at the home of lawyer Daniel Ricketson in New Bedford.

In other words, important and far-reaching ideas were in the air in 1852, and, into this serene and reasonable prosperous community came the high school — a place of learning entirely in keeping with the new American tradition. The school's entrance requirements are listed in an early school committee report: "A good knowledge of arithmetic through simple interest, grammar in parsing, geography sufficent to be familiar with maps, reading, and spelling."

Out of 95 applicants, 70 were admitted in the first year. The first principal of Fairhaven High School was M. L. Montague, who received a salary of $80 a month; his two assistants were Miss Angeline B. King and Miss Hannah A. Bryant. A matter of historical interest is the fact that the first two graduates of Fairhaven High School to enter college were John D. Taber and Isaac Delano, who matriculated at Middletown and Yale, respectively.

For the next half-century, the town took great pride in its small but effective high school, regarding it as a symbol of the staunch New England belief in the value of education, free and open to all who were qualified. In addition, as the years progressed, more and more of the town's elected officials came from the roll of the school's alumni. Certainly, Fairhaven High School came to play a vital part in the development of able and informed citizenship and sound community government.

Not only did the school produce alumni who served capably in time of peace, but it also numbered among its graduates many who fought valiantly in the Civil War; their names may be read on the Roll of Honor in Riverside Cemetery. The Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II also found innumerable graduates fighting for their country, putting into practice the ideals of patriotism and the love of a democratic life which the school has always striven to instill in its students.

As the school grew in numbers, so did the town itself. The whaling industry declined, but, through the endeavors of Henry Huttleston Rogers, the Atlas Tack Corporation was founded, in 1902, in the community. In addition, numerous boat-building and marine-repair firms began to appear.

On January 26, 1892, Mr. Rogers invited all alumni of the high school to be his guests at a banquet in the Rogers Grammar School to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Fairhaven High School. At that time, he expressed the hope that an alumni association would some day be formed.

Mr. Rogers' suggestion eventually bore fruit, and, on February 2, 1894, the Fairhaven High School Alumni Association was founded, with Mr. Rogers himself as president and Norman M. Paull as secretary. At the first meeting, Charles P. Rugg, who had served as principal of the school from 1857 until 1861, praised the valuable role the school had played in the life of Fairhaven and asserted that the aim of education is to develop "the ability to grasp facts and reason from them to accurate judgments" — a definition of education, incidentally, which still holds true.

On this same occasion, Albert B. Collins, an alumnus of the school and obviously a gentleman with a pleasant sense of humor, recalled some of the lighter moments of his Fairhaven High School days. Mr. Collins, like so many alumni before and since, remembered best some of his teachers' eccentricities. He reminisced, for example, about the instructor who had "an aversion to spiders" and her great horror, one day, at finding the schoolroom floor littered with representatives of the dread species. He spoke amusingly of the teacher who "rode a velocipede to school every

day" and of "the female Sandow, who threw the boys about the room."

Yes, Fairhaven High School had its lighter moments; after all, no school is a real one without an occasional and humanizing touch of the ludicrous.

In 1902, the entire community celebrated the 50th anniversary of the high school in a two-day observance, which included church services, special exercises at the school, a mock-school session (in which Mr. Rogers himself was a spirited participant) and a banquet — both of the latter events being held in the Town Hall.

It was also about the turn of the century that several changes were instituted in the curriculum of the high school. In 1900, typing and stenography were introduced to mark the beginning of the commercial course; in 1901, sewing became a part of the curriculum, and, in 1902, manual training and cooking were added to the school's offerings.

We now come to a period of major importance in this history of Fairhaven High School, a period dominated by the figure of Henry Huttleston Rogers, whom Mark Twain, one of his closest friends, described as "the best-bred gentleman I have met on either side of the ocean in any rank of life, from the Kaiser of Germany down to the bootblack. I am his principal intimate, and that is my idea of him."

Thomas A. Tripp, one of Fairhaven's most distinguished citizens and a man who has served for a half-century as president of the Fairhaven Institution for Savings, recalls that Mr. Rogers took him aside one day and announced his intention to present a new high school to the town. Mr. Rogers was, at that time, planning to leave for an extensive trip through Europe; consequently, he asked Mr. Tripp, who had served on the school committee and who always had been one of Fairhaven's most civic-minded residents, to find out what sort of equipment other good secondary schools had, to draw up a set of recommendations, and to spare no expense in arranging for Fairhaven the very best high school that money and meticulous planning could build.

Mr. Tripp did his appointed task well. In April, 1905, earth was first broken for the new building, and the builders, working at a good rate of speed, managed to complete the construction in eighteen months. The school was probably the best-equipped in the nation and could boast its own electric light plant, gas plant, and the finest experimental apparatus for laboratory work in the sciences to be secured at that time.

The basement floor, in particular, was regarded as one of the most remarkable in the country. It contained manual training rooms, cooking rooms, showers, lockers, and a refectory that was floored with rubber tiling and finished in quartered oak. Guastovino vaults were constructed for the ceiling.

The entire building was Elizabethan in style, 100 feet in height and containing three stories. Granite taken from the Fort Phoenix ledge was utilized for the basement and first-floor walls; Indiana limestone was used for the bolts, sills, lintels, and portals of the two entrances. Darlington bricks, with limestone trimmings, formed the second story; the third was laid with limestone dormers and brick gables. A magnificent clock, with four dials, was installed in the tower. In all, 1,600,000 bricks were used in the construction of the building.

Hand carvings, beautiful murals, and Italian marble floors distinguished the interior of the school, while the windows were of French plate glass. The library was especially beautiful; its hand-carved walls, bookcases, chairs, tables, and floor were of rare and expensive bog oak, imported at great cost from the British Isles. An excellent gymnasium and a superbly-styled auditorium, remarkable for its perfect acoustics, added both beauty and utility to the extremely modern and feclicitously appointed building.

The new high school was informally opened by Mr. Rogers on April 11, 1906. On that day, excited students held a few classes in completed rooms and then filed back, across the street, to the old school, for the new building was still very much in the process of construction.

On December 30, 1906, the school was formally presented to the town by Mr. Rogers. Copies of the original document now hang in the corridors of Fairhaven High School.

Many people like to speculate about the original cost of the school; early newspaper accounts estimate the cost of construction at between $500,000 and $750,000. Today, of course, the building could not be duplicated for less than $3,000,000 — and this is a very conservative estimate.

In 1933, the Fairhaven High School Addition was opened to house junior high school classes. The architects attempted, as nearly as possible, to use construction materials that matched, at least in appearance, those of the parent school.

Fairhaven High School has grown tremendously since that January day in 1852 when the original building opened its doors. From a faculty of three and a student body of 70, it has expanded so that its teaching staff now numbers more than 30 members. Its student enrollment, as presented by Principal Chester M. Downing in his annual report to Superintendent of Schools Flavel M. Gifford and the school committee (the statistics appear in the 1951 Town Report), totalled as of October 1, 1951, 753 pupils — which included 548 in the four-year high school, 142 in grade eight, and 63 assigned in two seventh grades to the High School Addition because of crowded conditions in the elementary schools.

In addition, the school's graduates more and more are going on to higher institutions of learning. Of the 1951 graduating class, more than one-third went on to advanced study. Of the 41 business graduates, more than half were placed in office positions.

For many years, Fairhaven High School has maintained the Class "A" rating granted by the State Department of Education. Its graduates have done well in college, in the business world, and in important community enterprises.

Besides the high academic rating which the school has enjoyed since its inception, its athletic teams have also won many honors in the field of competitive sports. The football teams of the 1920's, for example, won state-wide fame for their skill and winning ways, as did representatives of the school's track squads. In recent years, the school has won two Class B championships in the thrilling Southeastern Massachusetts Basketball Tourney held in the Boston Garden. In baseball, too, for the past several years, the school has been represented by nines of excellent caliber.

No account of the history of Fairhaven High School would be complete without at least brief mention of the school's own observance of its 100th Anniversary. In January of this year, the New Bedford Standard-Times published a long and informative article summarizing the school's 100 years of service.

On April 9, James Parkinson, dean of the Fairhaven High School faculty, spoke to the student body on "Old Fairhaven and the Whaling Industry." The Art Department of the school, under the direction of Mrs. Lillian Modesto, supervisor of art, painted attractive murals to illustrate the whaling industry once so important here. The Senior yearbook, the "Huttlestonian," took for its theme the school's centennial year and published a 100th Anniversary edition. The Alumni Association has planned for a banquet and dance June 12.

The centennial festivities will be climaxed on Friday, June 13, with the presentation of a pageant on Junior Day and again that evening for interested citizens. This pageant, "Three Tenses," written by Miss Mabel G. Hoyle, chairman of the English Department, appealingly offers glimpses into the past history of the school, the story of its present activities, and a prophetic look into the future.

Finally, at Commencement exercises on June 18, the theme of the program will be "A Century of Service."

So, on this 100th birthday of Fairhaven High School, those of us to whom the school is dear look back with pride on a century of notable accomplishment and look forward with confidence to the next hundred years. In 2052, we are certain that loyal alumni, celebrating the 200th anniversary of our alma mater, will regard her with the same affection that we of 1952 feel. We are certain, too, that 100 years from now, Fairhaven's citizens perhaps will repeat the sentiments expressed at the beginning of this brief account: "Yes, Fairhaven High School is all this — but it is more. It is that intangible feeling of pride and affection that glows in those who call the school their alma mater. It is, in short, a place that we love and that we salute proudly."

PRINCIPALS OF FAIRHAVEN HIGH SCHOOL

M. L. Montague, 1852; J. P. Allison, 1854; George Thatcher, 1855; Charles P. Rugg, 1857; Albert Hale, 1861; D. A. Caldwell, 1865; H. W. Warren, 1865; M. R. Chase, 1866; E. Whipple, 1866; C. Woodman, 1867; A. Sanford, 1869; D. A. Caldwell, 1870; H. C. Crane, 1870; G. A. Nichols, 1871; Vincent Moses, 1874; D. A. Caldwell, 1874; G. H. Tripp, 1879; L. R. Wentworth, 1881; F. W. Elliott, 1884; Z. W. Kemp, 1885; L. B. Varney, 1889; H. H. Tucker, 1890; E. L. Chapman, 1891; H. L. Freeman, 1894; E. B. Gray, 1896; E. A. Hafford, 1897; W. A. Charles, 1899; Albert B. Kimball, 1906; George C. Dickey, 1920; Chester M. Downing, 1937-.

Fairhaven High School
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